

April 5, 2021

Dear Judge Arleo:

You have before you the many words of lawyers who argue either for or against my release for compassionate reasons or for a sentence of home confinement. I know my lawyer has presented all the relevant legal rationale as well as the conditions at Fort Dix Satellite Camp and the serious medical risks to many inmates like me. I would like however, to express to you my own feelings and appreciate your patience in reading this.

I acknowledge and have always acknowledged, that my crime was very serious, inexcusable. While I know my crime was grave, it does not define me. It does certainly illustrate my human flaws and own lapse in judgment and a moral compass that went completely astray. It is a painful scar on my life of nearly 74 years, one that will never fade and remain a constant reminder of my own wrongdoing.

My incarceration has certainly changed the man I am, and so much for the better. It has reset the aforementioned moral compass. I believe it is important for the Court to understand the life altering feelings of being put in prison. An environment like this puts everything into a stark perspective. The important things in life, truly important things, become unavoidably evident. The love and support of my wife and family, the simple freedoms of every day life, the ability to be a productive part of society are those of value.

I would like you to know that I am doing even more to become who I want to be. Even in the face of cancelled programs I found the ability to make valuable contributions. I have been working daily in education; teaching, scheduling classes when possible and even mentoring and counseling. I have self studied different disciplines in both psychology and the law. I have organized and participate in religious services. Yesterday, after waiting a full year, we were able to celebrate a full Mass for Easter with the visiting priest. It's been a long year.

Because of my age and the First Step Act, I have served approximately 35% of my statutory sentence and know that it has accomplished the goal of promoting respect for the law and the assurance that my past mistakes could never be repeated. The illegal activities, of which the Prosecutor wishes to remind us in page filling detail, are more engraved in my own consciousness than could ever be imagined. My potential exposure, even at this time, to Covid-19 and its variants as well as other health risks, could turn my current sentence into a death sentence. I ask the Court to weigh the value of deterrence against increasing the threat of a possible lethal infection.

I am a person of hope. I believe that faith, hope and hard work can overcome the ugliness and sins of the past. I believe that hope will assist me in having the opportunity to make amends to all and to correct the damage I caused and to live the remainder of my life as a truly productive member of society.

I ask that Your Honor see the future with the same amount of hope and redemption as I do.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gary J. Basralian



SUBJECT: Washington State Dept of Health confirms cases of "vaccine breakthrough"
DATE: 04/03/2021 04:06:07 PM

News Release

For immediate release: March 30, 2021 (21-089)

Contact: DOH Communications

Public inquiries: State COVID-19 Assistance Hotline, 1-800-525-01230

Cases of COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough confirmed in Washington state

OLYMPIA -- The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is investigating reports of people in the state who tested positive for COVID-19 more than two weeks after being fully vaccinated. Scientists call these "vaccine breakthrough" cases, which are expected with any vaccine.

Large-scale clinical studies found that COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of getting COVID-19 in vaccinated people by up to 95% compared to people that did not receive the vaccine. However, the vaccines are not 100% effective in preventing infection. This means a small percentage of fully vaccinated people can be expected to still get COVID-19. These are identified as breakthrough cases.

Out of one million fully vaccinated individuals in Washington state, epidemiologists report evidence of 102 breakthrough cases since February 1, 2021, which represents .01 percent of vaccinated people in Washington. Breakthrough cases have been identified in 18 counties. The majority of those in Washington state with confirmed vaccine breakthrough experienced only mild symptoms, if any. However, since February 1, eight people with vaccine breakthrough have been hospitalized. DOH is investigating two potential vaccine breakthrough cases where the patients died. Both patients were more than 80 years old and suffered underlying health issues. Further investigation will help to identify patterns among people who have COVID-19 after vaccination, such as if a virus variant may have caused the infection.

"It is important to remember that every vaccine on the market right now prevents severe disease and death in most cases," said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. "People should still get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible, and encourage friends, loved ones, and co-workers to do the same."

DOH confirms a breakthrough case with a positive PCR test or Antigen test in a person more than two weeks after he or she has received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Additional investigations help determine clinical and outbreak information.

"Finding evidence of vaccine breakthrough cases reminds us that, even if you have been vaccinated, you still need to wear a mask, practice socially distancing, and wash your hands to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others who have not been vaccinated," said Secretary Shah.

The Department of Health will provide a regular report regarding vaccine breakthrough in Washington state beginning in late April.

The DOH website is your source for a healthy dose of information. Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Sign up for the DOH blog, Public Health Connection.

SUBJECT: Burlington County Health Director Responds to Uptick in Covid Risk
DATE: 04/03/2021 04:06:07 PM

Home - County News

Posted on: March 29, 2021

Burlington County Health Director responds to uptick in COVID-19 risk

Forum on Police Interaction (93)

Burlington County Health Department Director Dr. Herb Conaway called for renewed vigilance by county residents about mask wearing and social distancing in the wake of an uptick in COVID-19 activity.

Burlington County's COVID-19 infection risk moved from "moderate" to "high" on the latest COVID-19 Activity Level Index report issued by the New Jersey Department of Health. The rating reflects increases in COVID-19 cases and a rise in the positivity rate from testing.

More than 33,000 Burlington County residents have tested positive for COVID-19 and a total of 739 have died since the pandemic's start last March.

There were 789 new cases in the county between March 19 and March 25 for an average of 113 new cases a day.

"We've been battling this pandemic for over a year now so it's easy to understand why people may be experiencing COVID-19 fatigue, but we must remember that the virus is still very active in our state and in our county and we cannot let down our guard," Conaway said.. "We're at a critical time. Even though thousands of our residents are now fully vaccinated and thousands more are getting their COVID-19 shots every day, the presence COVID-19 variants and lax attention to proven infection control practices threaten to reverse the progress we've made since the winter spike."

He encouraged residents to take a COVID-19 test if they exhibit symptoms or have contact with someone who tested positive and to seek an appointment for a vaccination if eligible.

COVID-19 testing continues to be available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at the Health Department's testing site at Rowan College at Burlington County's Student Success Center off Route 38 in Mount Laurel.. Testing is from 8 AM to noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays and from noon to 4 PM on Wednesdays.

Residents eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine can register for an appointment at the Burlington County Vaccine Mega-Site in Moorestown at www.virtua.org/vaccine.

As of March 19, a total of 195,972 doses of vaccine had been administered to Burlington County residents, amounting to about 35% of the county's population over the age 16.

"In Burlington County we're making steady progress toward our goal of getting 70% of our adults vaccinated before summer. This is an encouraging development that offers us hope of an eventual end to the pandemic, but we are not there yet," Conaway said. "Everyone must continue to wear masks in public, including those who have received vaccine, and everyone must continue to follow social-distancing rules and quarantine guidelines. Now is the time for renewed vigilance, not indifference or carelessness. If everyone continues to do their part, we can stop this recent uptick from growing into a more serious outbreak and help bring an end to this crisis once."

SUBJECT: THE ATLANTIC: You're not fully vaccinated the day of your last dose
DATE: 04/03/2021 04:21:04 PM

You're Not Fully Vaccinated the Day of Your Last Dose
Patience, grasshopper.

KATHERINE J. WU
MARCH 17, 2021
WIKIMEDIA / THE ATLANTIC

For much of 2020, the world pinned its collective post-pandemic plans on a single, glimmering end point: the arrival of an effective COVID-19 vaccine. The resounding refrain of "when I'm vaccinated" has long conjured images of people shedding their masks, hugging their friends, and returning to a semblance of normalcy. And now some vaccinated people are doing exactly that. In recent weeks, I've heard dozens of stories from friends, family members, and co-workers about vaccinees who are immediately dropping their guards after their shots, in some cases discarding their masks and congregating with others. Deepa Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona, told me that one of his colleagues another biologist went out to a celebratory dinner right after getting a dose at a 24-hour clinic.

But immunity to the coronavirus doesn't just magically manifest the day someone gets a shot. The CDC does not grant membership to the "fully vaccinated" club until at least two weeks after the final dose in a vaccine regimen a time that roughly corresponds to when most people are thought to acquire enough immunity to defend against a symptomatic case of COVID-19. Only then, the agency announced last week, can vaccinees start to carefully change their behavior, mingling maskless in small groups indoors, visiting the unvaccinated on a limited basis, and skipping postexposure quarantines.

The jab itself "is momentous," said Bhattacharya, who shared photos of his own injections on Twitter in hopes of swaying hesitant peers. But each injection is merely a precursor of what's to come. "Ultimately, the real momentous 'occasion' is what happens gradually after the [final] shot," he said.

This is true of all vaccines: Their protective effects take several days or weeks to kick in. It's the reason we get our flu shots in the fall, well before the height of respiratory-virus season, and it's why health officials often recommend that vaccines required for travel, such as those that ward off yellow fever, be administered about a month or more in advance. Vaccination, and the defenses it affords, is less a singular event than a series of steps on a shifting landscape.

From the standpoint of protection, not a whole lot happens on day one of a vaccination regimen which makes concern about infections detected around the time of vaccination unwarranted. In late December and January, social-media platforms were swarmed by a flurry of nervous headlines and sound bites documenting positive test results in recently injected health-care workers and politicians. But cases like these are entirely expected. The shot simply delivers a package of study materials to the body; immune cells must then internalize the information about the infectious invader, a complex process that unfolds over days or weeks..

Shortly after the vaccine is administered, these cells embark on a crash course in the coronavirus. Fast-acting immune cells inspect the shot's contents, then ferry the intel back to their specialized colleagues: B cells, the immune cells that make antibodies, and T cells, which can annihilate virus-infected cells, learn to zero in on the pathogen with laser-sharp precision.

The body also works hard to ensure that only the best B cell and T cell fighters are recruited to the cause. Some of these cells will even compete with one another, eliminating the weaker or less discerning fighters. "They need to be able to recognize when they should respond, and when they should leave well enough alone," Bhattacharya said. "That takes some time."

In this light, a SARS-CoV-2 infection that occurs before the body has had time to respond to a vaccine is about as surprising as students failing an end-term exam because they haven't finished the reading assignments. (Some asymptomatic infections are also expected with the currently cleared vaccines, which are expected to be better at protecting against symptomatic disease.)

Vaccine-induced protection also endures and evolves as the pathogen-memorizing pupils of the immune system crunch through their lessons. There's nothing particularly special about day 14; antibody levels ramp up gradually after a shot or series of shots is delivered, Padmini Pillai, an immunologist at MIT, told me. But data collected during the vaccine makers' clinical trials indicate that after two weeks, the body reaches a "threshold of protection," Pillai said. (It's worth mentioning here that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines require boosters three or four weeks after the initial injection; the Johnson & Johnson jab,

which contains very different ingredients, seems to be memorable enough as a single shot.)

Although plenty of people have documented their shots on camera, vaccinees aren't taking many selfies at the two-week mark: The end of a waiting period is a pretty dull milestone, especially compared with the photogenic pizzaz of the injection itself, which comes complete with a needle-tipped syringe filled with lifesaving liquid.. The day on which people are cleared to alter their behavior is, by contrast, devoid of "salient, concrete cues," says Gretchen Chapman, a psychologist at Carnegie Mellon University who studies human behavior and vaccines. "Two weeks later, nothing happens; there's no event," she told me. "It's not like your arm turns purple to tell you, It's time."

Considering the nation's sputtering rollout and the many logistical problems that have stymied delivery, getting any shot at all is worthy of celebration. But there's a gentle deception tucked into fixating on the moment a vaccine enters an arm: It runs the risk of conflating the time of injection with the time of protection.

Clearer messaging about the vaccine timeline might help, says Alison Buttenheim, a behavioral scientist at the University of Pennsylvania who studies vaccines. Receiving the second shot in a two-dose vaccine regimen, for example, counts as series completion, Buttenheim told me. That's not the same thing as what the CDC, in its new guidelines, means by "fully vaccinated."

And yet, many news outlets and public-health authorities, including the CDC's own vaccination tracker, are putting people in the "fully vaccinated" count as soon as they receive their second shot of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, or their one-and-done dose of Johnson & Johnson. (The agency acknowledges in a footnote at the bottom of its tracker that it is using fully vaccinated in two different ways.)

To distinguish injection from protection, vaccination cards could include the dates of not just the shots themselves, but the end of the recommended waiting period. Both Chapman and Buttenheim pointed out that some health departments and vaccine makers once distributed refrigerator magnets to the young recipients of HPV shots, which are delivered in multidose regimens over several months. To keep parents and their kids from forgetting their next appointment, the magnets lit up when it was time to return for a booster. If something similar were handed out at COVID-19 vaccination sites to denote when people reach the protection threshold, "wouldn't that be nifty?" Chapman said.

Perhaps people should take a second or third vaccine selfie, commemorating their immune status after their cells are better prepared to fight off the virus. These photos wouldn't be as flashy. But they might help paint a more realistic portrait of what vaccination actually is not a discrete moment, but a gradual unfurling on scales large and small. Immunity builds iteratively, not instantaneously, in people; it accumulates slowly, over time, in populations. The vaccines are here. After a difficult year of waiting, we all just have to wait a little longer..

KATHERINE J. WU is a staff writer at The Atlantic, where she covers science.